

## **Scoping comments for the GPT project**

I was born in Bellingham, WA, and have lived here on and off for 63 years.

I share the concerns others have raised regarding the potential impact of the GPT project on physical health and the physical environment and associated costs. Whatcom County residents and taxpayers nationally are currently paying for toxic waste removal at the former Georgia Pacific site in Bellingham, so we have experience cleaning up after private industry. It is as unpleasant as cleaning garbage from one's front lawn. Furthermore, as we live in a globally interconnected world, people around the world bear the cost of decisions made locally and such far-reaching costs must be considered if we are to be conscientious and responsible global citizens.

More immediately, I too am concerned about the cost of constructing street overpasses and railroad improvement to support the GPT project. I understand this cost will be paid by taxpayers, not the industry that will benefit from such construction, which feels eminently unfair when the public benefits are minimal. Since November 2012, Whatcom County has added 2,400 new jobs without massive public investment or impact. The GPT project promises to add 200 new jobs at enormous cost to the public.

More centrally, and a concern I have not heard voiced, I am concerned about the potential social impact of the GPT project. Since the Georgia Pacific plant shut down, I have seen a growing sense of community vitality and pride in Bellingham. Bellingham has a growing reputation as a community that cares for its environment, supports clean industry, and acts as a role model. New residents, tourists, and clean industries are attracted to Bellingham because the environmental conditions allow for and support this increasing vitality and emerging sense of community.

I question, and I hope you will consider, the potential impact of the GPT project on the community spirit and sense of community in Bellingham. I realize social impacts are generally assessed quantitatively. However, in addition to the physical and financial aspects, I urge you to make a qualitative assessment that takes into consideration the joy Bellingham residents find in their community, the degree to which social conditions allow for a sense of peace and well-being in the community, and whether the GPT project would change how people feel about their community and possibly erode the sense of community.

Best regards,

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